

Guidelines for Reporting Occupation and Industry on Death Certificates

We have noticed more death certificates with improper information in the occupation and industry fields. The following information was taken from <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2012-149/pdfs/2012-149.pdf>. Hopefully this will help to clarify any questions you may have. However, if you still have questions, please contact Deb or Christine at 402-471-0912.

Definitions of occupation and business/industry

The U.S. Standard Certificate of Death contains two items relating to occupation and industry: "Decedent's usual occupation" and "Kind of business/industry." *Decedent's usual occupation* means the type of job the individual was engaged in for most of his or her working life. It is not necessarily the highest paid job nor the job considered the most prestigious, but the *one occupation*, of perhaps several, that accounted for the greatest number of working years. *Kind of business/industry* refers to the particular type of activity within which the chosen occupation is found. Specifying the name of a company is not sufficient unless the name describes the nature of the business. Example: An elderly man may have worked between the ages of 25 and 60 as a welder in a steel-fabricating shop and then shifted to lighter work, such as night watchman, prior to retirement. Although he may have been a night watchman for several years before retirement, the proper entry on the death certificate would be "welder" for occupation and "steel fabrication" for industry.

Importance of the business/industry item

Both the occupation and business/industry items on the death certificate are required to accurately describe an individual's occupation. Inadequate description of business/industry has been a major reporting deficiency on death certificates. This item is necessary and is as important as the occupation.

Examples: A person whose occupation was "grinder" may have been employed in a chemical factory, textile mill, car repair shop, feed mill, glass factory, optical factory, television factory, sawmill, sugar refinery, and so forth. The various occupations described in the combinations of "grinder" with the industries range from those requiring skilled craftsmen to unskilled laborers, and the occupational hazards vary with the material involved and the nature of the task. Therefore, the entry of "grinder" for occupation or entries of "grinder" for occupation and "factory" for industry on the death certificate are unacceptable. Many inadequate entries could be rendered acceptable by the proper completion of the industry item. For instance, "laborer" and "molder" are incomplete entries for occupation without the information on business/industry; however, "laborer" for occupation and "sawmill" for industry and "molder" for occupation and "brass factory" for industry are complete and acceptable entries.